

LIBRARY POLICY MANUAL

ADM-30: Materials Selection Policy

Date Issued: 2/10/82, 11/14/90

Revised: 2/18/04

Attachment(s): 1

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to support the Library in its mission and to define the criteria and selection process for materials in all formats and genres and for all ages and interests. It also acts as a directive and guideline for those making the selections. (See also the Mission Statement of the Library and the Collection Development Plan in the Administrative Section of this manual as well as the Donated Materials Policy in the Technical Services Section of this manual.)

II. Policy

The Mary Riley Styles Public Library of the City of Falls Church provides quality services, resources, and lifelong learning opportunities through books and a wide variety of other formats to meet the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs and interests of its diverse and changing population. The Library provides information for the exchange of ideas and affirms the right of each patron to determine for himself which library materials and services he/she chooses. In keeping with this policy, resources are provided equally to all library users, both adults and children. Furthermore, the Library bases its selection policy on the philosophical statements of the American Library Association's (ALA) *Library Bill of Rights* and its Interpretations and other pertinent ALA Position Statements, copies of which, can be found in the Administrative Services section of the Library's Policy Manual.

As a public institution disseminating information in a democratic society, the Library has an obligation to create an environment in which all individuals have the freedom to explore ideas without fear of judgment or censure. This includes providing materials that represent unpopular as well as popular point of view, including political, social, and religious opinions that some may consider controversial or objectionable. Works being considered as "offensive" by some may be meaningful and significant to others. Works being considered should be viewed as a whole, not in isolated parts. The Library does not promote or endorse any particular belief or view expressed in the materials that are selected, but offers collections of considerable scope and points of view, which allow individuals to examine different sides of issues and make their own decisions. Conversely, a decision not to include a work in the collection does not indicate disapproval of the material. The Library does not endorse any group that seeks to make these decisions for the community.

Selection of adult material is not restricted by the possibility that these materials may come into the possession of children. Responsibility for a child's use of library materials, regardless of format or content, lies with the parent or guardian, not the Library. The Library does not act "in loco parentis."

Patrons are free to challenge the presence of material in any collection and may request in writing reconsideration of the appropriateness of the item in question. The Library does not support or subscribe to any system of industry coding, rating, or labeling.

The Mary Riley Styles Public Library affirms the principle of the individual's freedom to read, view, and hear and is committed to the principles embodied in the *Library Bill of Rights*, the *Freedom to Read Statement*, and other documents of the American Library Association adopted by the Library Board of Trustees as part of the Library's policies. All materials selected for inclusion in the Library are considered constitutionally protected under the First Amendment. (See also the *ALA Library Bill of Rights/Interpretations/Other Pertinent ALA Position Statements* in the Administrative Services section of this manual.)

A listing of all of the library's materials is accessible through the Library's online catalog. Information identifies materials for circulation and/or in-library use.

Responsibility for Selection

The Library Director is ultimately responsible and has the final authority for the selection of materials within the framework of the selection policies adopted by the Library Board of Trustees. The Director delegates responsibility for various areas of the collection to appropriate members of the staff with subject expertise. They, in turn, examine specific journal and book review publications and advertisements to select materials for the collection. Patron suggestions are solicited, welcomed, and given serious consideration. Gifts of materials and funds for collections are accepted and considered for inclusion into the collection according to the Library's standard selection criteria. (See also the Donated Materials Policy and the Memorial/Honorarium Policy.)

Criteria for Selection

The Library adheres to the principles set forth by the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers in establishing its criteria for selection.

Selection criteria are intended to ensure that the collection includes:

- a wide variety of ideas and balance of opinion in types of expression and materials;
- responsiveness to community needs and interests, both past and present;
- materials that are recommended by professional and critical reviews;
- materials that are within budget;

- formats effective and appropriate for use by the public and for library storage, use, and circulation;
- items of public demand;
- quality of content, considering such factors as accuracy and timeliness, clarity, comprehensiveness, artistic merit, effectiveness in accomplishing its intended purpose, insight into the human and social conditions, and the power to stimulate or provoke thought, understanding, or interest;
- a relationship to existing Mary Riley Styles Public Library collections and material on the subject available by other means, such as online or in other area libraries;
- appropriateness and effectiveness of medium to content;
- items of professional and/or literary significance and competency of the author/editor/publisher/producer/composer/film maker etc.;
- insight into the human and social conditions;
- information that is appropriately handled for the age of the intended audience;
- consideration of the reputation of the author/editor;
- plausible plots, clarity of style, consistency in characterization, effectiveness in sustaining the reader's interest, and lasting value and effective presentation;
- consideration of the quality of writing, design, illustrations, or production;
- materials pertaining to local history or of local interest;
- consideration of space limitations;
- materials of current significance balanced with those of historical importance.

Factors considered in the selection of reference materials are currency of information, authority, reliability, scope, objectivity, arrangement, ease of use, format, cost, community interests, other holdings of the Library and other libraries in the Washington DC metropolitan area.

Electronic resources are evaluated for purchase using the same general criteria as reference materials. Other criteria include search capabilities, ease of connection, system compatibility, frequency of updates, and the configuration of user licenses. Additional factors for evaluation include whether the electronic resource is unique, a duplication or a supplement to an existing source, staff training and customer assistance requirements, and remote accessibility. Electronic resources may be bought in lieu of more traditional formats (i.e. books or microfilm/fiche) if staff feels it is warranted.

Magazines are purchased in accordance with the wide range of interests of the public and to supplement the book collection since they bridge the gap that results from the delay that occurs before scholarly writings are published in book form. Often they provide information not available in books and can serve the library staff as book selection aids, book reviewing media, and professional reading. Criteria applied to periodicals include accuracy and objectivity, accessibility of their content through indexes, ease of consultation, demand, need in reference work, presentation of a point of view or subject needed for balance in the collection, and cost of the subscription in relation to its possible use. As magazines and newspapers represent substantial and

continuing costs, the level of Library funding directly affects the number of new orders placed, or even of titles continued, in any given year. However, all possible efforts are made to continue each title. Foreign magazines and newspapers are selected on a limited basis and in lieu of foreign language books. Backfiles are maintained for both magazines and newspapers and retention decisions are made on a case by case basis using the following criteria: value to the collection, index availability, content life, usage frequency, and duplication of information either in other materials or formats such as microforms.

United States newspapers are selected to provide news coverage at the international and national level and for the Commonwealth of Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Audio and Visual media are considered for purchase on the basis of published reviews and the basic standards of technical quality, timeliness, social significance, and public demand, including formats for the disabled. Materials are purchased in a variety of subject categories for children, young adults, and adults.

The Local History collection exists to preserve, organize, and manage the use of materials that deal with the geography, natural, cultural, social, economic, and political history, both past and present, of the City of Falls Church and its citizens. The collection consists of books, photographs, maps, drawings, plans, doctoral dissertations, manuscripts, printed monographs, local government documents, periodicals, videos, films, pamphlets and broadsides, oral histories, artifacts, local authors' works and letters.

Gifts and donations: See the Donated Materials Policy.

Budget for Materials

The Library uses its funds for: current purchases, enhancing the scope of the collection, and filling in gaps in the collection retrospectively. The amount of materials purchased is in direct proportion to the size of the Library's budget and donations in each fiscal year.

Formats Collected

Library materials include, but are not limited to: books, periodicals, other printed matter, audio, video and electronic media, reference aids that facilitate patron access to these materials, and programs that encourage and enhance patron utilization and enjoyment of the Library. Materials are chosen subject to budgetary and space constraints as well as established criteria for each format and genre.

The Library strives to provide a variety of formats that facilitate patrons' use. They include, but are not limited to:

- Hardbound books
- Paperbound books

- Board books
- Books to go (groups of books on the same subject)
- Book and tape sets
- Books on disc
- Videos
- DVDs
- Compact discs
- Audiocassettes
- CD-ROM items
- Microforms (microfiche and microfilm)
- Periodicals (newspapers and magazines)
- Electronic formats (online databases)
- Manuscripts
- Photographs
- Photostatic copies
- Foreign language materials
- Pamphlets and maps
- Government documents

The Library acquires multiple copies when high demand for a title is anticipated or the number of reserves on a title exceeds 5 and only then, if the budget permits.

Access to Materials

All library materials are available to the public. Those items, which by themselves need protection because of rarity, cost, high demand, susceptibility to loss or damage, fragility, or format unsuited to heavy use are available on a limited basis. Placement of materials within the Library is generally based upon assigned classification and appropriate age groupings. (See also ALA's *The Freedom to Read, The Freedom to View, Access to Electronic Information, Services and Networks: an Interpretation of the Library Bills of Rights, Free Access to Libraries for Minors: an Interpretation of the Library Bills of Rights* in the Administrative Services portion of the Library Policy Manual.)

Every attempt is also made to familiarize patrons with other sources of information in the metropolitan area, and citizens of the City can request materials not selected by the Library through Interlibrary Loan services. Materials requested through this service are reviewed periodically and used as a guide for selection. (See also the Interlibrary Loan Policy)

Selection Sources

Selectors make use of the broadest selection of professionally recognized review and evaluation resources, trade and literary journals, book lists by recognized authorities,

advice from competent people in specific subject areas, standard bibliographies, and general interest publications to guide their selection of library materials.

Such publications include, but are not limited to, the following:

Publisher's Weekly, Library Journal, Booklist, School Library Journal, Hornbook, Kirkus Reviews, New York Times Book Review, and VOYA.

Standard lists may be consulted, such as:

Public Library Catalog, Fiction Catalog, Children's Catalog, Middle and Junior High School Catalog, Reader's Adviser, Best Books for Children, Variety Video Directory, and Library Journal's annual lists of best business books, best science books, etc.

Publisher's catalogs, online reviews, and such sites as Amazon.com are also consulted as available and appropriate to the evaluation and selection of materials for public library patrons.

Withdrawal Criteria

Materials are withdrawn from the Library to maintain a current, active, and useful collection reflecting the goals of the Library and the needs of its patrons. In keeping with national standards, the Library attempts to withdraw annually 7% to 10% of the book collection. The process of weeding a collection is equal in importance to the original selection of materials. In fact, selection and discarding are two sides of one coin representing the maintenance of a vital, useful, well-kept collection. As with selection, the final decision rests with the Library Director in any disputed case. The weeding of materials, however, is not intended to sanction removal of library materials based upon any controversy surrounding the material.

Weeding, or the removal of obsolete materials to be discarded, is an integral part of the total collection selection and development process. The following categories of materials are weeded from the collection:

- Works containing obsolete or misleading information;
- Superseded editions;
- Superseded copies of standard works no longer in demand;
- Worn or extensively marked materials;
- Excess multiple copies of seldom used titles, retaining two copies if seldom used within the last three years;
- Works no longer relevant to the needs of the community.

Discarded materials become surplus property and may be sold for fund-raising purposes, sent to recycling facilities for disposal, or discarded.

Replacement of Materials

The library does not automatically replace materials withdrawn from the collection because of loss, damage or wear. The decision to replace an item is based on the following considerations:

- Demand for the title;
- Number of copies already held;
- Existing coverage of the subject;
- Imprint;
- Availability of newer and better materials;
- Cost and availability of the specific title;
- Availability of funds for this purpose.

Requests for Reconsideration of Materials

The patron's choice of library materials for personal use is an individual matter. While a person may reject materials for himself/herself, he/she cannot exercise censorship to restrict access to the materials by others. Therefore, since the Library has a responsibility to protect the rights of all users, it does not limit the use of its collection. Furthermore, although staff may offer guidance in selection, the actual monitoring of the reading, listening, and viewing by children and adolescents is the responsibility of their parents or legal guardians.

Recognizing that the diversity of materials selected for the library collections may result in some requests for reconsideration, procedures contained in this policy are followed in regard to formal reviews. Any patron who objects to the presence or absence of a work must complete the Request for Review of Library Material form (attached).

The item(s) are reevaluated within the context of the Library's selection criteria, mission statement, and policy on intellectual freedom. Once a Request for Review of Library Material form is completed by the patron, three professional staff members are to form a review panel which has 21 days to read the material, form a recommendation, and forward that recommendation to the Library Director, who in turn notifies the patron in writing of the final decision on the disposition of the item.

If the patron is not satisfied with the recommendation, written appeal must be made to the Library Board of Trustees within 30 days. The appeal is added to the agenda of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board. A final determination is made in writing to the patron within 30 days. The challenged material remains in the collection until a determination is made.

See also the ALA's *Challenged Materials: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*.